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THE
MIRACLES
OF THE
IRVING SCHOOL
SHOWN TO BE
UNWORTHY
OF
SERIOUS EXAMINATION.

BY THE
REV. DAVID THOM,
FORMERLY MINISTER OF THE SCOTCH CHURCH, RODNEY-STREET
NOW MINISTER OF BOLD-STREET CHAPEL, LIVERPOOL; AUTHOR
OF "THREE QUESTIONS PROPOSED AND ANSWERED," &c.

If therefore the whole Church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say ye are mad. 1 Corinth. xiv. 23.

LONDON :
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1832.

739.

MIRAL

IRVING

UNW

THE SERIOUS

REV. DA

FORMERLY MINISTERS OF THE
NOW MINISTERS OF BOLD
OF "THESE QUESTIONS"

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
all people with interest, and the
noblest, will they not say

LC

INDIAN & CO. 1882

Lord Street.

*The following little treatise which owes its existence solely
to the suggestion of my excellent friend*

SAMUEL M'CULLOCH, Esq.

is, se inconsulto ac inscio, dedicated to him.

Liverpool, 14th January, 1832.

to the following list of names
to the suggestion of my excellent

2

is an account of the

Appendix with names of

THE
MIRACLES
OF
THE IRVING SCHOOL, &c.

WHAT IS A MIRACLE ?

TO this question a great variety of answers have been returned and upon some of these curious theories have been constructed. Indeed, the vagueness of the notions commonly entertained respecting the subject, have rendered it a field in which sceptics and enthusiasts have alike delighted to expatiate.

A miracle, as the word imports, is something wonderful—something out of the ordinary course of things—something which, by the surprising nature of the circumstances connected with it, is deserving of and likely to command attention. Miracles, as understood by writers on the subject of religion, is that series of surprising and supernatural phenomena, recorded in the scriptures, by which the truth and divine origin of Judaism and Christianity were attested.

ARE MIRACLES TO BE LOOKED FOR AT THE PRESENT DAY

Understanding the question in one sense, I answer yes, in another sense, no.

There is a sense in which miracles not merely exist at the day, but have continued to exist from the beginning until now.

I mean to allude to the regular recurrence of the the exquisite structure of the human frame, or to of divine interposition in the affairs of nations and which every where meet the eye. All these are only very surprising, and justify the Apostle Paul on made by him at Lystra, that in no period of God *left himself without witness*. Acts xiv. 17. These, however, are not the miracles of which I speak.

The miracle which has existed from the earliest times, is that of *men living in the world, who are* *different*. Men, in whom, although clothed with outward appearance like others, there is a divine principle, by their possession of which they are actually distinguished from the rest of the

the belief of the divine testimony.

ears are assailed by the loud laugh of vulgarity. I am constrained to witness the half-suppressed plays on the lips of more refined and polished men.

the belief of the scriptures—that which all principles—as something extraordinary, deserving the name of miracle! Do you then refuse to pay the slightest attention to your

s. If the belief of the divine testimony as you suppose it to be, I admit that you are to despise it, and to despise me as anything marvellous. But be it admitted, there is a previous question of God's word so very common? Is the belief of it common?"

? What if it should so happen,

that not only the belief of the divine testimony, but even the profession of believing it, is in reality the rarest thing in the world?

To believe *the testimony of God*, is evidently to believe it *as the testimony of God*. That is, to be satisfied or persuaded of the truth of any statement *on the authority of God*, is to receive it, not *as a matter of opinion*, but *as absolutely and infallibly true*. 1 Thessal. ii. 13. And this, because *if we receive*, or are convinced of the truth of the *witness of men*, much more must we receive, or be convinced of the truth of *the witness of God which is greater*. 1 John v. 9. That there is no possibility of the slightest doubt, hesitation, or uncertainty, with respect to the truth of the divine testimony, existing in the mind of him by whom it has been believed, may be thus proved. After assuming that the testimony of God, is greater or stronger than the testimony of man, let it be supposed that any doubt concerning the fact of God's having borne testimony to him, may remain in the mind of that person by whom the testimony of God has been believed in, and what follows? Why, that *the testimony of man* is actually greater than *the testimony of God*. For, man's testimony can in many cases produce a conviction *so strong and so completely exclusive of doubt, as to be scarcely distinguishable from absolute certainty*, and yet, according to the terms of the supposition just made, the conviction produced *by the testimony of God*, which is *greater or stronger than that of man*, is actually, *not so great or strong as the conviction produced by that of man!* The supposition, therefore, is clearly inadmissible. Nay, the truth of the converse of it is abundantly manifest, that if the testimony of man, when believed in, can frequently produce a conviction *so closely approximating to absolute certainty as to be scarcely distinguishable from it*, the testimony of God, as greater than that of man, must, when believed in, produce, as its legitimate and necessary effect, *absolute certainty itself!* The belief of the divine testimony, then, thus completely demolishing and annihilating doubt, how many, pray, believe the scriptures, not *as the word of man*, but *as the word of God?*

at numbers believe them in this way."

you are mistaken. The number of persons who, with certainty, receive the scriptures as divinely inspired and infallibly true, is extremely limited. Of those who make a profession of believing them, the great majority, like the poet of Lord Byron, conceive, that "humble doubt," being inconsistent with a religious spirit, is the best guard against presumption and uncharitableness. Several, on the ground of external evidence, or of reason, may attain to a conviction of the truth of the scriptures, which, by the mere natural mind, is not derived from absolute certainty. But to have God as a witness in the conscience to the truth and authority of the scriptures, is a privilege which falls to a very few indeed.

It is, that to few is it conceded to see the only light in which they can be *certainly* true and divine, namely, *the certain personal testimony which themselves have in the promise of everlasting life.*

To say, that none believe the divine testimony, is, *as certainly and infallibly true, but without the slightest doubt or hesitation, as eternal life to themselves personally?* The record, that is, the very testimony itself, that *God hath given to us eternal life;* 1 John x. 11.

Thus to receive the scriptures as divine, is not to that of man, in any other way. Nothing upon the authority of a being unacquainted, in order to our receiving them upon the authority of God as the testimony. It is, understand his nature or character when understood, must be understood by love, and love can only be understood by loving love borne towards ourselves. In this and scriptural process, we arrive at the truth of Byron, Vol. I.

at the conclusion, that it is only in consequence of our apprehending the love which God bears towards ourselves personally, that we become acquainted with his character—and that it is only as acquainted with his character, that we receive any statement, declaration, or promise on his authority. His character as the testifier is manifested to us through the medium of his testimony—and his testimony is seen to be true in the light of the new and divine character as the testifier with which it makes us acquainted—the character of the testifier, and the truth of the testimony, both shining into our minds at one and the same moment, by means of our apprehending as addressed to ourselves personally, the promise of everlasting life, which the scriptures are the channel of conveying to us. *God is LOVE, and, in this was manifested the love of God TOWARDS US, because that God hath sent his only begotten son. into the world, that WE might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved US, and sent his son to be the propitiation for OUR sins.* 1 John iv. 8. 9. 10. See also verses 16th and 19th. Under these circumstances, how impossible to separate from the belief of the divine testimony, the belief of our own personal and beneficial interest in that testimony?*

“ Now we understand you, and at once concede to you, that very few either believe with certainty their own personal interest in everlasting life, or make a profession of believing it. They who do so, must be the most irrational of intelligent beings. What are the whole of your statements but a specimen of that vicious mode of argumentation, commonly known by the technical appellation, of *reasoning in a circle*? Oh no ! Mankind in general, from the avidity with which they gulp down the absurdities of their religious instructors, lay themselves open to a charge of egregious folly, but fools as they are, they are not so great fools, as believing with certainty God’s love to themselves personally, would prove them to be.”

This concession of yours is enough for my present purpose. Few, in your opinion, believe, certainly and unhesitatingly,

* See Barclay of Edinburgh *on the assurance of faith*.

at *God hath given to them eternal life*, and it appears to be extraordinary and unaccountable, that any man should be induced to do so. But, as a miracle is something which cannot be accounted for on natural principles, is not your concession equivalent to admitting, that for any man to believe, with absolute certainty, that *God hath given to himself personally eternal life*, is, according to your own view of matters, a *miracle*? Is it a miracle indeed it is.

The infallible certainty of the truth of the divine testimony is in the mind, through the medium of, and in connection with, the infallible certainty of God's love to ourselves. This is possessed by very few. Is not uncommonness one of the characteristics of a miracle?

Is it a surprise that any should possess, or should avow, the possession of such a principle. But is it not essential to a miracle that it should create astonishment?

Nothing in nature, or in the effects produced in the natural world, is any evidence, corresponding to that infallible certainty of eternal life, which is the result of believing the divine testimony. It is the very point which I am labouring to produce this certainty of eternal life, superior to ordinary evidence. *The evidence and the miracle*, are, in the case in question, both supernatural. Does not *supernatural interposition* enter into the definition of a miracle?

Applied in conveying to the mind *the belief of eternal life*, we, who are *the children of God by faith*, are avowing ourselves to be the subjects.

It is not to adopt as our own, with some slight modification, the remark of one of the acutest of modern philosophers, in giving our conviction with him, that "the Christian religion was at first attended with miracles, which cannot be believed by any reasonable man; that as "moved by faith to assent to the doctrine, we are conscious of a continued miracle in the fact; that respects the ground on which we hope to stand, the natural principles of our under-

standings*, and gives us a determination, *or rather absolutely constrains us*, to believe what is *altogether* contrary to the custom and experience of *an unbelieving world.*†

We are satisfied with the Apostle, that in conferring upon us the belief of the truth, there has been displayed the same *exceeding greatness of God's power, and the same working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.* Ephesians, i. 19, 20.

We see *the gate* of faith to be *so strait*, and *the way* to be *so narrow*, that the circumstance of any man's getting into it, is as astonishing, as that of *a camel passing through the eye of a needle.* But our own experience is to us a comment upon the words with which Christ accompanies the proverbial saying just quoted, that *the things which are impossible with men, are possible with God.* Luke xviii. 25, 27.

It is true that the generality of mankind, and even of religious characters too, are disposed to laugh at us and our profession. *How can these things be?* is their question. Well, instead of there being any thing extraordinary in this, the matter of surprise to us would be to find worldly characters acting otherwise. High authority has informed us that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, and, therefore, so far from being surprised at the manner in which both the religious and the irreligious treat us and our profession, the miracle to us would be, to find *natural men* receiving *spiritual* views, and to have the declarations of scripture in regard to them thereby proved to be untrue.

This principle of *faith in the divine testimony*, as a *testimony addressed to every one who believes it*, has existed from the

* The *natural* ground of hope is *our own personal righteousness.*—Genesis ii. 16, 17. Matthew xix. 16. Acts xvi. 30. Rom. x. 3. The *supernatural* ground of hope is *the righteousness of the Son of God.*—Genesis iii. 15. Rom. v. 21, x. 4. 1. Corinth. i. 30, 31. 2. Corinth. v. 21. In passing from the former to the latter, we are conscious of undergoing a complete revolution.

† Hume's *Essay on Miracles.* The alterations made are in *Italics.*

ages until now. It is *the standing miracle of the God*. It does not, to be sure, suit those whose incessant prayer is, *we would see a sign from Heaven*, but it is perfectly suited to those *who are themselves the subjects of it*. He who has *faith, hath the divine witness or testimony in himself*, Rom. viii. 16, and who, from the identity between the views of things disclosed in the Scriptures, and his own views, *has the spirit itself bearing witness with his spirit, as a child of God*, Rom. viii. 16, feels no desire to have his volume contradicted, by seeing the kingdom of God, which he belongs to it, held in repute by an unbelieving world. His faith which is *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1, prevents him from the part of Passion in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which would have him wait patiently for the realisation of the kingdom *at the resurrection of the just*.

But faith does not enable us to *subdue kingdoms*, as the ancient Saints sometimes did, Heb. xi. 33; but, it is a principle possessed of which *we subdue ourselves*. Proverbs, xvi. 32, I John, v. 4 5. It is in us, exactly what it is in every other department of nature, and we know that it neither will nor can change, until *this earthly house of our tabernacle* is dissolved. 1 Cor. v. 1: But if faith cannot change, how can it *control and overcome it*. We, *as Christians, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and passions*. Gal. v. 24.

It is not *to raise the dead to life again*, which is of far more importance, it is *the redemption from death unto life*. John xi. 25, 26. It is *to us the present communication of life*. John, v. 24, xvii. 3. I John, v. 12. As a principle which, once possessed by us,

It is not like what is frequently described as ignorant and enthusiastic, a principle which to-day and to-morrow may have passed away, but to whom the character of God as revealed through the medium of *his own*

testimony, and to whom this revelation has been made, in the light of the fact of *eternal life freely bestowed upon himself personally through the finished work of the Son of God*, I John, iv. 9, is possessed of a source of blessedness which, so far from being exhaustible, is in him *a well of water springing up into everlasting life*. John iv. 14.

But the point of view in which the miraculous nature of faith is perhaps most clearly discernible, is that of *its setting the mind perfectly free from priestcraft of every description*. John viii. 36. In thus expressing myself I speak advisedly, for my observation of mankind has taught me, that infidelity has its priestcraft, as well as religion. Whatever enables any man, or set of men, to work unduly upon the fears of their fellow men, whether they be fears of ridicule, or fears of Hell, I have no hesitation in stigmatizing as *priestcraft*. Now who is he that is raised above all fears of men,—all dread of their ridicule and their threatenings,—but he who believing the divine testimony knows *certainly and infallibly*, that *he has in Heaven a better and an enduring substance*? That *suffering with Christ here, he shall reign with Him hereafter*? Such a man requires neither the curtain of privacy to be drawn around his death-bed, as is alleged respecting Voltaire, and some other characters of the same stamp, nor the attendance of the Priest with his *viaticum*, and similar trumpery, as is practised among the votaries of the church of Rome, and certain other churches which would not exactly like to be classed along with her. God himself having spoken peace to the conscience of the believer, through the medium of his own most blessed word, who is man that he should be able either to invalidate, or confirm the heavenly privilege? He who knows *by faith*, that is, *by having the divine witness in himself*, that in resigning his present paltry existence, he is about *to be absent from the body, to be present with the Lord*, what cares he for those who either *directly* by sceptical reasoning, or *indirectly* by suggesting the necessity of his performing some strange mystical ceremonies, in order to the perfect satisfaction of his conscience, would try to shake his confidence in the promises

Heavenly Father? No. Living and dying the believer
defiance all the assaults of scepticism, whether it assume
n, bold, God-defying front with Paine, Taylor, and Car-
put on the more secret, serpent-like form of insinuation
y the ordinary classes of religionists—undisguised infi-
Romish superstition, and the cant of Methodism, are all
pt aloof by him—and led on in the evenly tenor of his
n *grace to grace* and *from strength to strength*, by that
l mental illumination, which as it began with, so it is
ed on by the scriptures opened up to his understanding
divine author, he is at last brought *to see the King in*
and the land which to the eye of sense is afar off.
tossings to and fro with every wind of doctrine,
plays of the cunning craftiness of men whereby
it to deceive, which on every hand abound, is
miraculous in the fact of a few individuals passing
world, totally unaffected by the opinions of men in
on—with consciences sealed to *human views* of
open continually to the entrance of *the word*
thus safely and infallibly conducted by *their*
himself to *the realms of glory*. ?*
of the divine testimony the only miracle which
modern times ?”

ough the prime, the distinguishing miracle
s it was of the Jewish Church, Heb. xi.
its constant and inseparable attendant, *the*
of prophecy,† a miracle which shall con-
on the reluctant notice of the world till
his miracle is exhibited in the three fol-

ce of the Jews at the present day, as a
ll others, and cherishing sentiments of

day on the Assurance of Faith.

real miracles, and as such only can be ad-
lation: If it did not exceed the capacity of
ture events, it would be absurd to employ
ent for a divine mission, or authority from
cles.

hostility to Jesus of Nazareth, as decided and inveterate as ever.*

Secondly—The very small number, comparatively speaking, of those who from among both Jews and Gentiles believe the gospel—the existence of a large anti-christian or spurious church, which, from the earliest ages until now, has continued to grow up along with the true church—and the opposition still given by all classes of men, whether pious or profane, to the doctrine of *eternal life unconditionally bestowed through Christ Jesus upon the children of men.*

And, thirdly, the progressive spread of the knowledge of the gospel throughout the world, and the progressive advancement of the minds of believers in the understanding of the sacred volume—a circumstance not only in accordance with numerous direct prophecies, but of itself constituting a beautiful analogy between natural and spiritual growth.

My readers are now in a great measure prepared to understand the sense, in which, if the question be put to me, *are miracles to be looked for at the present day?* I answer No.

Whenever the word miracles is used, the generality of mankind immediately conjure up the ideas of *giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and the power of walking to the lame, healing the sick, raising the dead, speaking with tongues,* and matters of that sort. There is nothing remarkable in this, as it is the only view of the subject which *the natural mind* is capable of taking. But it certainly is remarkable, that the circumstance of any view connected with religion being *congenial to the natural mind*, should not at once excite suspicions of its incorrectness in those who as believers of the truth must know, that *the things of the Spirit of God cannot be apprehended by a mind in its natural state.* 1 Corinth ii. 14.

“Is it the import of your last remark to deny, that the miracles enumerated by you in the preceding paragraph are greater than the communication of the principle of faith?”

* Should any of my readers be desirous to see *the argument from the fulfilment of prophecies* brought out in all its lustre, by a reference to the past and present circumstances of many other nations besides that of the Jews, he cannot do better than consult Bishop Newton's learned and laborious work *on the prophecies.*

If, by *greater miracles* you mean, more calculated for the
 ment to rouse attention and astonish the natural mind,
 I admit that to raise a dead man to natural life, is a greater
 miracle than to believe the gospel. If, however, by a *greater*
 miracle be meant, one in which divine power is more conspic-
 uously displayed, and which when understood is more cal-
 culated to produce a permanent impression on the mind, then
 the belief of the truth is the greatest of all miracles.

Without entering into all the *minutiae* of the case, it may be
 observed, that every man who believes the divine tes-
 timony does so, not in pursuance of, but in opposition to his
 feelings, tendencies, and ideas. Unless this were so,
 it would be nothing miraculous in his faith; and unless his
 faith were miraculous, Scripture would be untrue. John iii. 3,
 v. 17. Every man's mind prompts him, naturally
 and necessarily, to seek for and attempt to obtain the divine
 blessing by his own personal righteousness. Even the great
 saints of those who are serious and pious and evangelical,
 in their estimation of themselves and the world, are found, like
 the Pharisees, *going about to establish their own righteousness,*
not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. Rom.
 vii. 10. In the state of mind of such persons there is nothing
 supernatural, and therefore nothing *miraculous*. When the
 testimony, however, is carried home to the conscience
 by faith, he is raised to views of divine things essen-
 tially different from those which occupy the mere natural mind.
 Instead of aiming at the establishment of his own
 righteousness, whether openly or covertly, he is inspired with
 the promise to obtain hope through grace, founded on his
 union with the Son of God, and thereby
 to attain to divine and perfect righteousness. *Christ is the end*
of the law for righteousness. Rom. x. 4.
Christ is his righteousness, not only
 as he is to his conscience, Rom. vi. 1, but, strange
 as the assertion must ever appear to be to
 the natural mind, in him, henceforward, the principle
 of righteousness. Rom. viii. 3, 4. Perceiving that
 he is the beloved, Eph. i. 6, his obedience

no longer springs from the *selfish* motive of a desire thereby to earn for himself the divine favour, but from the *generous* motive of *love to God* as having *first loved him*. 1 John iv. 19. And not only so, but as a believer, *he cannot sin*. Unbelief is the principle of all evil; and therefore in the mind of the unbeliever nothing but evil does or can dwell. Mat. xii. 31, 32, John iii. 18, 19. From the conscience of him who believes, however, this principle is, by the introduction of *the righteousness of God*, at once and necessarily expelled; and as unbelief cannot gain admission into a conscience occupied by the divine righteousness, the existence of evil and its necessary attendant condemnation in the conscience of a believer is, thenceforward, absolutely impossible. 1 John, iii. 9, Rom. viii. 1. To believe the divine testimony, then, implies a complete change, a complete revolution, in so far as religion is concerned, in the state and circumstances of the mind. Instead of being swayed by *natural*, the conscience of the believer is swayed by *supernatural views, feelings, and principles*. He is, as to his mind, *created anew*. 2 Corinth. v. 17, Eph. iv. 23. But if so, he is the subject of a miracle; nay, of the greatest of all miracles; for, as *the mind* is acknowledged on all hands to be superior to *the body*, can it be questioned, that in *the new creation of the mind* there is a far greater display of divine power, than in that greatest of all other miracles *the restoration of natural life to the already organized body*?

The fact is, there is not a greater proof of the ignorance of the Scriptures, and the carnal nature of the sentiments of those who call themselves Christians at the present day, than that morbid craving after external miracles, which the Pharisaical portion of them exhibit. *A sign from heaven*, as it was the oft expressed desire of the Pharisees of old, so it is the grand object of the longing of our modern devotees. A greater sign than any that they require even *the new birth—the new creation—the resurrection from death unto life* of those who believe the truth, is continual presented to their notice, John iii. 2, 3; but, like their Jewish prototypes, as they do not believe the inspired writers, *neither will they be persuaded although one rise from the dead*. Luke, xvi. 31.

Little are our modern miracle hunters aware of the extreme folly and childishness, as well as criminality of their procedure.

“ Miracles, in one sense of the word, subsisted in the church, for at least three hundred years after the commencement of the Christian era, and what is there to hinder them from being performed now ? ”

Foolish people that you are ! Is it possible that you can be ignorant of the consequences in which by this mode of reasoning you involve yourselves, as well as of the groundless nature of the assumption which you make ?

Direct your attention to one or two of the consequences of your reasoning. Are you aware, that many of the worst superstitions and abominations of the church of Rome, had been introduced in the second, and that many more were in existence in the third, centuries of the Christian era ? That men who called themselves the followers of the Lord Jesus, had even begun to attach a superstitious importance to the sign of the cross—to receive the doctrine of *the real presence* of Christ in the Eucharist—to invoke Saints—to put up prayers in behalf of the living and the dead—to seclude themselves from the world by retiring to monasteries and deserts, a practice which soon degenerated into tyrannical institutions—and so on ? And are you aware, like-

Nay, if not most of the miracles said to have been performed during the second and third as well as following centuries, were performed in proof and honour of these corruptions and abominations ? If not, it is right for me to acknowledge that this was the case, and that if you will receive the miracles, you must also receive the doctrines and practices which were the object of these miracles to establish. They stand or fall together.* Nay, I must acquaint you that it is out of your power to decline receiving the miracles which to you may appear to be suspicious, while all the miracles of this period come down to us with the same authority. My dear *Protestant*

reasons the Romish church hath to espouse, and is, if consistent with themselves, to suspect and reject.—“ If we admit the miracles, we must assume the sake of which they were wrought ; they both mutually establish each other:—Conyers

Discourse to his Free Enquiry.

friends—if in reality you deserve this honourable appellation—are you aware, that in order to be consistent with yourselves, your next step from the reception of the miracles of the second, third, and fourth centuries, must be into the embraces of the Church of Rome ?

Another consequence of admitting the miracles of the second and third centuries is, that so far from being able to stop there, you must admit those of a subsequent period likewise. For upon what authority do you receive the miracles of the second and third centuries ? Upon that of the Romish Catholic writers and ecclesiastical historians, to be sure. But do not the same writers and historians inform you, that miracles have, on suitable occasions, been wrought by the clergy and laity of their church, from the period where you are desirous to stop until now ?* And are you to be permitted to cut and carve upon the testimony of your witnesses ? To receive this, and to reject that part of their statements ? Would you be permitted to act such a part in regard to the evidence delivered in any court of justice at the present day ? Would you be permitted to charge the witnesses with gross prevarication, or rather positive falsehood, in the great bulk of their testimony, and yet to declare that you regarded them as perfectly trustworthy persons in certain matters, concerning the truth or falsehood of which, but for what they say, you could have no knowledge whatever ? Let me inform you that if you make any concessions whatever to the Roman Catholic Church on this subject, you will find it to be utterly impossible for you to draw the line of distinction between the period when true miracles ceased, and that when spurious ones began. Many Protestant writers who have made the attempt have, in the estimation of every well informed and judicious person, miserably failed. Besides, there is no point in regard to which such writers are more decidedly at variance with one another than this. While the majority of them with Mr. Dodwell, close their list of genuine miracles at the period of the conversion of the Roman empire to Christianity that is, about the beginning of the fourth century ; Mr. Whis-

* See Milner's *end of religious controversy*.

r. Waterland, two of the most celebrated names in a theological literature, carry them on till the end of the century; Dr. Chapman asserts that the fifth century is the portion of them; and Dr. Berriman, in one of his sermons, that the miraculous powers of the church were continued till the end of the sixth century. And shall Protestants, by admitting the existence of the miracles of the second and third centuries, thus in effect deny themselves in the utility of admitting those of a subsequent period? Shall we unwittingly play the game into the hands of the Pope of Rome? *Proh pudor!* Putting consequences aside, the assumption of miracles existing in the second, third, and fourth centuries, is groundless.

Regarding the period between the promulgation of the canon of Scripture, about A. D. 70,* and the death of Justin Martyr, A. D. 140, are supposed to have lived and flourished, as Clemens Romanus, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, commonly called the Apostolical Fathers. Epistles, and other writings ascribed to them, have reached us.† In works so very ancient as these, we may expect to meet with constant references to miracles. And yet, enough, with the exception of one or two passages singularly dubious import, their authors, persons generally supposed to have lived the nearest to the time of the apostles, prefer no claim to the possession of miraculous powers, nor speak of miraculous powers as possessed. Is not this quite inexplicable upon the principle of miracles having then been of every day occurrence?

The book of Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70. The hypothesis of its having been composed during the reign of Domitian, about A. D. 96, has evidently no foundation. John the Presbyter with John the Apostle, and other early writers, acquainted with the word of God, may satisfy us of the nature of the trash which these men wrote, or may have written—for I have great doubts as to the genuineness of the writings ascribed to them—by consulting the best translation. The Shepherd of Hermas is a preposterous presumption.

It is to be presumed, be twitted with the voice, the flame, and the martyr's martyrdom. Although not particularly scrupulous which they swallowed, and capable of digesting the alluded to, the dove appears to have been rather voracious maws of Mr. Dodwell and Archbishop Wake.

By Justin Martyr, who lived about A. D. 140, mention is made of miraculous powers as then existing, and the note which he sounds is taken up by Irenaeus, A. D. 180, Tertullian, A. D. 200, and the other *Fathers*, as they are called, who succeed. But who are the men that vouch their authority for the existence of miracles in their time? And what is the nature of the miracles which they have detailed to us? The answers which must be returned to these questions will be found to be any thing but favourable to the cause of apocryphal miracles. The Fathers, upon whose authority the miracles rest, appear, notwithstanding the estimation in which they are held by the Church of Rome, to have been ignorant, credulous, and bigotted—to have had their minds seasoned with a *quantum sufficit* of knavery—and not to have been over and above disposed to stick at a trifle, where their own personal consequence, or the interests of their party were concerned.* And as were the men, such also were their miracles. Absurd, childish, fraudulent. Dreams and visions—pretended cures of pretended diseases—and conjuring tricks in which the Christian exorcists strove to outdo the heathen magicians—are, without the slightest exaggeration, the categories under which the whole of them may be classed. Nay, what is more than any thing else calculated to beget suspicion even in the least reflecting, is, that the miracles reported to us by

* No doubt, in most of the qualities enumerated in the text, Papias stood pre-eminent. But that the other early Fathers are not to be exempted from the charge of fraud and folly which I have brought against them as a body, Justin Martyr's forced, far-fetched, and fanciful interpretations of scripture, mistakes of inscriptions, confidence in magic, genealogy of demons, and more than suspected forgery of the Sybilline books—Irenaeus' story about the old age of Jesus, and frequent appeals to the traditions and testimony of the Apostles in support of the most absurd and incredible doctrines—appeals which have constrained Dr. Whitby to say concerning him and Papias, to whom the charge equally attaches, that "they have shamefully imposed upon us by the forger of fables and false stories;"—the pretended visions by which Cyprian attempts to justify his having declined the crown of martyrdom—are many other circumstances well known to those who are familiar with the writings of these men and their cotemporaries—afford but too numerous and melancholy proofs. The conduct of the Fathers justifies completely Middleton's caustic remark, that "the greatest zealots of religion, or the leaders of sects and parties, whatever purity or principles they pretend to, have seldom scrupled to make use of a comendous lie, for the advancement of what they call the truth."

s, instead of having been wrought by themselves,* or
 essence, seem, on their own shewing, to have reached
 utter of hearsay, and in that shape have been handed
 them to us. "A great number of miracles were
 about this or that time?" When? where? how?
 to inquire. There is a most remarkable indispo-
 rather inability, on the part of the reporters, to sup-
 names, dates, and oth[er] particulars. But this is
 a considering the internal evid[ences] of miracles, we
 into account the purpose for which they are said to
 performed. When I peruse the narratives of miracles
 in the scriptures, besides the intrinsic excellence of
 s themselves, I am struck, I am struck, with the
 connection subsisting between them, and the wise
 olent ends which they evidently intended to
 But when I read of inf[ir]mities had been pro-
 good offered in sacrifice to us, refusing to swallow
 rated wafer, and of fire issuing from places in which
 n confined—of visions indulged to Christian sisters
 pose of prescribing the exact length and measure of
 —of beasts of prey assisting Anthony the monk in
 of his companions—of Saints informed by visions
 relations were suffering in the flames of purgatory—
 hanged into oil by Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem,
 aced lamps might be supplied at the time of Eas-
 c.—and all this to establish the doctrine of *the real*
 curious fact, that while Irenaeus is loud in his boasts of
 powers having been enjoyed by the Church in his day, about
 confesses that, under circumstances where the possession
 tongues would have been extremely useful, he found him-
 of it; and it is equally curious, that at the very time
 claiming for his cotemporaries the power of raising the
 d Theophilus Bishop of Antioch, being urged by Anto-
 n, to raise a dead man, as the most speedy and effectual
 ng his scepticism, was obliged to confess his inability

these *venerable Saints*," the Fathers, "have anywhere
 ther they themselves, or the Apostolic Fathers before
 owed with any power of working miracles, but declare
 hat such powers were actually subsisting in their days,
 d in the Church—that they had often seen the won-
 them—and that any body else might see the same
 ased; but as to the persons who wrought them, they
 in the dark."—*Free Enquiry*, &c.

presence—the divine approbation of *celibacy* and *monastic institutions*—the *existence of a state of torments from which disembodied spirits may, by the sacrifice of the mass, be released*—and the necessity of attaching an importance to a *Priesthood of man's device*, which is due only to the *Great High Priest of our profession* himself—can I allow myself to be so far imposed on, as to put stuff like this on a level with those proofs of immediate divine interposition which stand recorded in writings inspired by the Holy Ghost? Can I admit that a Being of infinite truth and wisdom was from time to time interposing miraculously, for the confirmation of a scheme of fraud and folly? Can I believe that miracles, such as those which the Fathers relate to me, ever existed?

————— Credat Judæus Apella,
Non ego.

The fact is, whether we consider the *external* or *internal* evidences of the miracles of the second, third, and following centuries, in both they appear to be woefully deficient. Can I be far wrong then in stigmatizing such miracles as part of a system of barefaced imposture?

I am satisfied, and every man acquainted with the sacred volume who takes the trouble to investigate the matter will soon come to be satisfied likewise, that we have no authentic record of *a single miracle*—in the sense in which the term commonly understood and employed—having been performed since the days of the Apostles, or, at all events, since the death of the last person, upon whom, by the imposition of their hands, miraculous powers were conferred.

It will not be to confute my reasonings to tell me, that as regards the miracles of the second and following centuries have been merely retailing the statements of the sceptical Conyers Middleton. Although it was by the scriptures themselves, that my first suspicions of the miracles in question were excited, I admit, that to a subsequent perusal of Middleton's able and well reasoned treatise,* I have been indebted for a distinct and comprehensive view of the subject, as

* *A Free Enquiry into the miraculous powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church through several successive centuries.* By Conyers Middleton, D.D.

ed me to present it in the shape which I have done to my
 s. I admit, likewise, that Middleton was a sceptic. The
 on, however, is not *what was Middleton?* but *what has*
been? Has he succeeded in destroying that structure
 id and delusion which, originally reared by the Fathers
 e Roman Catholic Church, learned Protestants, alas!
 thy of the name, have su been found lending
 most strenuous efforts to p Has he completed
 Luther and his immortal co by withdrawing the
 on of men from the juggler pery, and fixing it
 he inspired volume itself, ly began? I have
 itation in saying, that I as. His work, al-
 I allow not so intended, apr me one of the best
 ations of the step taken by ers at the period of
 eformation. I scarcely know re essential service
 some spirited publisher co r to the Church at
 esent day, than bringing out dition of the *Free*
*ry.**

it is not enough to have disproved the pretended mi-
 of the second, third, and following centuries. It is ne-
 to the perfection of my treatise, that I should show
 the impossibility of what are commonly considered
 being wrought by any person now in existence.

do by means of the following scriptural arguments.
 -By reminding my readers that genuine *miracles*, in
 in which the term is commonly understood, have al-
 wrought in proof, and with a view to the establish-
 divine Revelation.

son of this clearly is, that the man who in any one
 forms works to which human nature of itself is
 , by that very circumstance authorises, nay, obliges
 ness these works, to receive whatever communi-
 y see meet to make to them, as having the same
 the works themselves have. In other words, the
 , under such circumstances, a seal or attestation
 ommission which he bears. Thus reasoned Ni-

ddleton's remarks on *tongues* and *healings* would be
 liarily seasonable.

codemus; John iii. 2. Thus reasoned a greater than Nicodemus, John v. 36, x. 25, 37, 38, &c. &c.

Upon this exceedingly plain and obvious principle, miracles attested the divine origin of the Mosaic dispensation, and of the various prophecies which from time to time were delivered during the period of its continuance. Upon the same principle, miracles were employed in superseding the dispensation of Moses, and setting up that of the Messiah.

Now to come to the point.

Has God any dispensation to set up additional to that of the Messiah? If he has, then, reasoning analogically, he will introduce and confirm it by miraculous interposition, and for miracles under such circumstances I am fully prepared. But will any man venture to say, that the dispensation or reign of the Messiah, which, according to scripture, is to be perpetual—which is *to last as long as the Sun and Moon endure*—is, notwithstanding, during the existence of this present world to be superseded by another? If any man shall do so, he may find dupes disposed to listen to him, but he must not be surprised if all who love and reverence the inspired volume, turn a deaf ear to his asseverations.

Again, has God any thing to add to the canon of scripture? Has he any new revelations to make—any additional prophecies to deliver—any more persons *to move by the Holy Ghost* to the composition of divine, perfect, infallible records? If he has, then I am prepared for miracles. The miracles wrought by the Apostles, demonstrated the divine power and authority by which they spoke and acted, and the obligation under which those to whom they addressed themselves lay, to receive implicit confidence, whatever they might commit to write. Now if God is going to make additions to the canon of scripture; and if either Mr. Irving, or Mr. Bulteel, or Mr. Taylor, or Miss Hall, or Miss Cardale, or Miss Macdonald, or other person, is to be the honoured instrument of conveying these to the Church; then I am ready to listen to the *various tongues* of our modern prophets, and to consider the various other ways in which they may attempt to accredit their message. It will not be the strangeness and uncouthness

sounds uttered by them—it will not be the suggestion of the leading Journal of the British Empire, that *the unknown tongue* is “Hebrew yelled out with a Polish accent”*—it will not be the charge of combination and conspiracy in getting up the whole matter, made by a discarded confederate†—that will deter me from candidly examining into the pretensions of the devotees of the New School. Nay, in the case supposed, I am content to waive any advantage which I might derive from the fact of *the tongues* spoken by the Apostles and early Christians, having been not *unknown*, but *well known*.‡ But if, as is actually the case, I find upon the face of the scriptures themselves declarations that the inspired volume is complete; and if, especially, I find it closing with the denunciation of a curse against any man that shall add to, or take away from the words of the divine prophecy; Mr. Irving and his followers must hold me excused, if—the possibility of any supplementary revelation being thus out of the question—I decline troubling myself with the examination of miraculous powers, which I know could only be genuine on the incredible hypothesis of my Heavenly Father having neglected, eighteen hundred years ago, to make some communication to the Church, being now resolved to supply the omission.

this is not all. Let me hint to the modern votaries of religion, that the converse of the proposition upon which I have been insisting, is equally true. If new revelations imply new miracles, new miracles likewise imply new revelations. Mr. Irving and his followers have performed, or are capable of performing a *single miracle*,§ they come to us as accredited messengers, not requesting our attention as a matter of choice, but demanding it as a matter of right. It is no longer a question to listen, or not to listen to them. At our peril we must be deaf ear to their statements. Nay, in that case, any

* article of the *Times* (London) Newspaper, Thursday, 31.

† *Irving's unknown tongues discovered to be English, Spanish.*

‡ 11. See likewise the Greek of the 14th chapter of the 1st Corinthians. I would respectfully hint to the English word *unknown* is in Italics.

§ In the ordinary sense of the term.

declarations which they may please to make, *stand upon a level with those which are contained in the inspired writings themselves*. As workers of miracles they give us the same proofs of a divine mission which the prophets and apostles did, and are entitled to the same power and authority over our consciences, which we concede to these genuine servants of the Most High. Now, let me ask the thoughtless creatures who have allowed themselves to be ensnared by modern pretensions to miraculous power, if they have ever, for a single moment, reflected on these necessary results? If they have ever reflected, that supposing Mr Irving to be another Thaumaturgus—another miracle worker—their consciences are henceforward in his keeping? Perhaps they have not, and therefore let me hope, that the hint now given may, in some cases, not be unseasonable.

To this plain consequence, then, the asserters of modern miracles are reduced. It being obvious, on the highest of all authority, that the power of working *external* miracles, is the seal and attestation of a divine commission, if Mr Irving and his followers have wrought or are capable of working such miracles, they furnish us with evidence the most conclusive and irresistible that they are the bearers to us of a message from Heaven. In that case, so far from being *ordinary* Christians they stand upon a footing with the Prophets and Apostles themselves. As such their explanations of the scriptures: authoritative, nay, what they declare, being of the nature of new revelations, fall to be regarded by us as a most valuable addition to the inspired volume. Henceforward we must put up the lucubrations of Mr. Irving, and the other modern prophets, with the present contents of our Bibles! But a religious wiseacre prepared for this? If not, let them wait in time; for, most assuredly, the only alternative is, unhinging the canon of scripture, by admitting, as of equal authority with it, the miracles, and thereby the revelations of modern fanatics and enthusiasts; or, by means of *the sword of the Spirit*, beating down, absolutely inconsistent with it, every pretension, by which men have made, to the possession of what is commonly understood to be miraculous power.

secondly—The performance of what are commonly considered miracles at the present day, would indicate not an advance, but a retrograde motion on the part of the Church.

Thirdly, to prove this, by referring to the argument prosecuted by the Apostle Paul, throughout the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters of his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

The Corinthians appear to have boasted themselves in the degree of possessing miraculous gifts, to a degree superior to any in which they had been compared with any of the other Churches. The Apostle does not dispute this claim of theirs. But he devotes the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters abovementioned to show, 1st, that, as all these gifts proceeded from one and the same source, and were all intended for the attainment of the same end aimed at, the conduct of persons who possessed them were deemed the superior to those who were treating with contempt those whose gifts were inferior, was as absurd as it would be for such parts of the human body as are considered superior, to despise the inferior parts and to suppose that any of them could be dispensed with. Chapter 12th.

That there was a principle superior to all these miraculous gifts, viz. Love, which the Corinthians in the pride of their hearts had but too much overlooked. Chapter 13th.

2dly, That admitting a superiority of some miraculous gifts over others, the Corinthians had committed the blunder of placing the inferior to the superior. Chapter 14th. It is in the

thirteenth chapter—in which he demonstrates to the Corinthians the superiority of the divine principle of Love over all the other gifts of which they were so vain—that the Apostle prosecutes the argument of which I now avail myself.

The superiority is threefold. First, apart from Love all these gifts are worthless. It is only as expressions of Love that they have any value or efficacy. Verses 1—3.

Secondly, Love is superior to those gifts by its very nature, or, by the consideration of the effects of which it is productive. 4—7.

3dly, The superiority of Love is chiefly manifest in this, that all other gifts are to pass away, that is, after having served their purposes, are to come to an end, *Love is to endure.* 8—13.

It is this last position, or the transient nature of what are commonly called miraculous gifts, as contrasted with the perpetuity of Love, which gives a death blow to the Irving miracles.

This will be evident, if the language of the Apostle, from verse 8th to the end, be duly considered.

“ You Corinthians,” as if the Apostle had said, “ pride yourselves on the possession of extraordinary gifts, and that to a degree in which they have been conceded to no other Church. Now, although I have no wish or intention to deny that these gifts are most valuable, and that in your present circumstances they are subservient to purposes the most important, allow me to give you a hint or two which may tend to abate your pride and self-complacency. First, these miraculous gifts, so far from being destined to be of long continuance are speedily coming to an end. *Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.* Verse 8. That which is to be enjoyed but for a short time, cannot, it is of so great importance as what is permanent. But, secondly, if the mere fact of these miraculous gifts ceasing prove their inferiority to Love, which is a permanent principle, the reasons for their cessation demonstrate this still more forcibly, and render your folly in priding yourselves on them still more apparent. These reasons are, first, that the churches are now,” (I am supposing the Apostle to address the Corinthians,) “ in an imperfect state as to the communication of divine truth which they are receiving. *We know in part and we prophesy in part.* Verse 9. The church is obliged to depend for instruction as to the meaning of Testament scriptures, upon the inspiration, from time to time, of persons belonging to their respective bodies, who only particular portions of these scriptures opened up to them are necessarily *prophesying only in part.* But I have to say to you, that a period is rapidly approaching, when the cause of a complete explanation of the Old Testament will be committed to writing, by us his Evangelists and Apostles, and then shall your miraculous gifts, as only nec-

f that period, that is, in the absence of the New scriptures, or a sufficient portion of them, pass away. *which is perfect is come, then that which is in part is away.* Verse 10. Now, how foolish to think of gifts, the necessity of which, instead of proving rich to be perfect, prove you, on the contrary, to be of great imperfection ! Secondly, In regarding complacency the miraculous gifts which you possess, you expose yourselves to a reproach of which you are but

Pap, swaddling clothes, leading strings, and so on, which cannot be dispensed with while we are in natural infancy ; but it is not customary to find a man boasting that they still require and make use of

What should we think of a man of mature age still playing with his rattle, or his doll, or his rocking-horse, or with the toys and trifles by which the mind is amused in the early stages of existence ? What should we think of such a man laughing, and prattling, and indulging in those humours which we expect and make allowances for in those who are beginning the career of life ? Such conduct is, in fact, the question in the case of any man of sane mind. *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* Verse 11. And now, will you allow me to apply this illustration by saying, that as the necessity of miraculous gifts proves you to be in an infantine state, so by the boasts which you make of the score of your possessing such gifts in an eminence you prove unwittingly the infantine state of your spiritual things. You are just like children challenged by their little companions to produce as many toys, and to play the parts of a state of infancy, as they can. This is, of course, no doubt, be extremely galling to your pride, and suggests the only apology which can be made for being so long accomplished enough for my present purpose, I tell the intelligent reader to fill up the rest of the apostolic

the application of the foregoing to the pretensions of miracle workers.

Mr. Irving and his coadjutors, unless prepared to common cause with the Church of Rome, must admit not in the first, at all events in a subsequent age, the *lost gifts* of the early Christians were withdrawn. dictated by the Apostle, *prophecies failed, tongues ceased, knowledge* vanished away*. But a cessation of *miraculous powers* having once occurred, is there a single passage in the New Testament scriptures which declares these powers should afterwards be renewed and restored? how, consistently with the argument of the Apostle, *renewal and restoration* of them take place? Be it *remembered* that it is as connected with, and as the marks and indications of spiritual infancy and imperfection, that, in *ages* which we have been considering, they are spoken of as *states of spiritual infancy* having once come to an *end* any more than a state of *natural* infancy, can it after renewed? That state of imperfection in which the Church was, when, in consequence of its not possessing the New Testament scriptures, it stood in need of the occasional *miraculous inspiration*, and the other miraculous powers of *apostles and prophets*, having been superseded by that state of *completeness*, which is connected with its possession of the sacred records—what probability, nay what possibility is there, of its again exhibiting powers, the very existence of which would imply that it had been carried back to its state of imperfection? As soon as the writings of the *Evangelists and Apostles*, in which we have a complete and infallible revelation of the character and will of God, and a complete and infallible explanation of the Old Testament scriptures, came to be circulated among the Christian Church, the *miraculous gifts*, as no longer necessary, immediately ceased, and are we to suppose that God, after having, for six or eighteen hundred years, taught his Church by means of the New Testament scriptures alone, as the *perfect privilege* which the *part or imperfect* privileges were to be *discontinued*.

* The gift of infallibly interpreting, by direct occasional inspiration, the Old Testament scriptures—a gift, of course, only requiring complete and authoritative interpretation of these scriptures, which we have in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, had

xiii. 10, is now practically bringing a charge of im-
 against his own most blessed word, by exhibiting
itself and *without the aid of miraculous gifts*, insuf-
 the comfort and edification of his people? And yet,
 understood to be so or not, this is actually the import-
 ncy of all modern miraculous pretensions. Those
 they are made, represent the church as, not in a
re, but a *retrograde* state! As having reverted from
 things which is *more*, to one which is *less* perfect—
 been carried back from a *comparatively mature age*,
 her circumstances of *childhood and imbecility*! And
 the teeth of the scriptures themselves, which shew
 ver since the infancy of the Church in Eden, it has
 state of constant, uniform, and progressive advance-
 n any thing then prove more satisfactorily, the impos-
 miraculous gifts existing and being exercised at the
 y, than that the hypothesis of their being so, besides
 the sufficiency of the New Testament scriptures, ne-
 carries back the church to the lisping, and prattling
 ings of infancy?

—We have direct apostolical authority for affirming,
 are commonly regarded as miracles were confined to
 ges of the Christian Church.

ly enough, our proof of this is a passage, in which
 red that these miracles should take place in the

the deplorable and almost incurable inattention of
 o scripture, and such consequently their ignorance
 ants and meaning, that what I am now going to
 ough lying on the very surface of the sacred ve-
 it is but too probable, be new to most of my read-
 'atter days of the Jewish, were the *former days* of
 n Church. Our blessed Lord did not, at the pe-
 scension up on high, bring the Old Testament dis-
 mediately to a close, but allowed forty years to
 that event took place. This period of suspense
old age, during which, as the Apostle expresses
 , to *vanish away*. Heb. viii, 13—these were its

latter days. It was during this period that all the sacred writings were composed, and it was during, therefore, that all the genuine New Testamentacles on record were performed.

That the *latter days* of the Jewish dispensation, coming to the fulfury of that of the Messiah—and no *days* of the Christian dispensation—was to be the the outpouring of what are commonly called the gifts of the Spirit, is thus shewn.

In the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we are made acquainted with a very extraordinary event. *And of eleven tongues like as of fire*, upon the heads of the apostles and disciples when assembled on the day of Pentecost, their being enabled thereby to speak not *unknown* languages, which they themselves had never learned. The Apostle Peter, in addressing the multitude who had been brought together, took occasion, first, to quote a very remarkable prediction of the Prophet Joel, which, according to the Apostle, that inspired writer had foretold, that miracles, such as those which they then saw, should characterise *the last days.* But this is that which is spoken by the Prophet Joel, *And it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, &c.* Verses 16, 17. That is, as if the Apostle Peter had said, “in this miraculous outpouring of the Spirit, and the miracles which are flowing from it, behold a fulfilment of the prophecy, and a proof that the period now existing is *the last days.*” Here I put Mr. Irving and his friends upon the following dilemma. Either the Apostle Peter had given us an inspired and infallible interpretation of those words, which of course they will not affirm; or, if they deny it, denoting the period at which he spoke *the last days* to have meant *the last days of the Mosaic dispensation*, it is obvious that the miracle which we are considering occurred in the last but the first days of the dispensation of the Messiah. This being admitted, it follows that the miracle, and the other miracles foretold by Joel, were destined to take place, not *new*, but *then*—and that even although

nothing upon which faith can legitimately be exercised except the declarations and promises of the word of God. To rest it upon any thing else is the height of presumption, as well as arrant folly. But upon what divine testimonies can such a miracle-working faith as that Mr. Irving and his friends contend for, be exercised? In Mark xvi. 17, 18. For, the promise contained in this passage was, we know, fulfilled, in every particular, in the apostolical age; and if Mr. Irving shall contend that it is to be applicable to every succeeding age likewise, (as he has actually interpreted it must be), he becomes bound to reconcile this with the fact of no fulfilment of it having taken place in the last centuries.—Not upon James v. 14, 15. For, that the prayer of which is in this passage declared to be necessary for the recovery of the sick, is evidently the faith of the apostles in 1 Corinth. xii. 9, and must, therefore, like the other miraculous gifts enumerated in the context of that passage, have passed away, in process of time. These two passages being abstracted—passages evidently referring to things which were peculiar to the first ages of the church, and which consequently no longer exist—upon what testimonies, who pretend to the possession of miraculous powers, now rest *their acts of faith*? Why, upon nothing but vain surmises of their own, that, although after having answered some very important ends under certain given circumstances, miraculous powers did along with those circumstances come to an end, it was not that their cessation was final, but that they might again appear, and might be exercised by Christians under circumstances totally different. But in the absence of any express, unqualified, divine promise that miracles after having once ceased were to be restored—are the mere surmises of men to be received as a suitable and sufficient ground-work for an

ords more and I have done.

int to those who know the truth, the necessity of a caution and circumspection, than have been evinced in them in regard to this matter. Many of them

require to be reminded, I fear, that there is such a thing as a *noviciate* in Christianity. 1 Tim. iii. 6, Rom. v. 4. A little caution—a little “trying of the Spirit” by that unerring standard the Holy Scriptures—at the present moment, may obviate the necessity for much bitter repentance afterwards.

Pretensions to the possession of miraculous power, similar nay superior to those set up by Mr. Irving and his followers are not new. The *French Prophets*, after having by their tremblings—and faintings—and trances—and cries for mercy—and exhortations to repentance—and denunciations of wrath—attracted a great deal of notice abroad—about the beginning of the last century, found their way to the city of London, where they contrived to make some hundreds of converts. But the event proved that their temporary success had been the result of artifice and delusion. Their history is a matter of record. *Sat verbum sapienti.*

I do not require to be told that, if duly attentive, the believer may see the hand of God in every thing. I know, Nay, I am aware of the fact, that in so far as *our petitions* according to God's will, he heareth us. 1 John v. 14. I know, also, that God has no where pledged himself to answer our petitions, when we pray for what is *in opposition to his will*, or presume to urge him to bestow upon us *certain gifts* which he has only promised to bestow *conditionally*. Above all, he has not promised to answer us when we venture to pray for *things without a warrant or authority for so doing*. Of his word has he declared, that after the cessation of his gifts, it is his purpose to renew and restore them—and, as faith can only refer to, and rest on what is testified of, *for miraculous gifts cannot be to pray in faith.*

I have little or no acquaintance with the science of medicine, but this I know, that neuralgic complaints, the cure of which is more or less dependant on suggestion, are still in a great measure a *terra incognita*. It is a matter within the experience of every medical practitioner, that the most unexpected results are often obtained in a tolerably extensive practice, that the most unexpected varieties, in cases of the kind alluded to, are from time to time taking place. The knowledge of this fact should

l men and others, exceedingly cautious in concluding their inability to account for the cures of relations instances, that such cures must be *miraculous*.

ring the whole matter to a close. "The evidenceacles having been performed," say Mr. Irving and rs, "is so strong as to be absolutely irresistible." rrence to their miracles, say the followers of Prince

So, about a century since, said the persons who themselves to have been cured by visits paid to the Abbé de Paris. So says the Church of Rome. If at hand Milner's *end of religious controversy*, you hat able and zealous advocate of the *Mother of claring*, that, so far from being easily gulled by pre-miraculous power on the part of her members, as are taught to believe, there is nothing so minutely and so thoroughly sifted by her as the alleged miracles who are brought forward as claimants for canonization that to such an extreme, indeed, is this carried, caused it to pass into a proverb, *there is nothing as to prove a miracle at Rome*. And yet miracles, are from time to time substantiated to the complete of the Papal chancery. Well, how do I deal with Thy I just oppose to them *the shield of faith*. However I may be to point out the circumstances of fraud they originated, or the means by which the Romish contrived to render them plausible, I know, upon dles already stated, *that they cannot be true*. It is for God to set the seal of his veracity to a system of and imposture; and therefore I am satisfied, without nation of them, that Popish miracles, like the systems of which they are adduced, *must be the offspring of of lies*. And in the very same way do I deal with the Mr. Irving, or any other person calling himself a

Knowing, upon the authority of the scriptures, *must be false*, I at once throw them overboard. My Father has no more occasion for Protestant than for testcraft to advance his cause—and yet what but would be the gainer, in the event of such miracles

as those now contended for being actually performed? *The truth as it is in Jesus* would not be promoted thereby, for it, spising all human and adventitious support, stands fixed immoveable, upon the authority of the scriptures alone. the glory of man—the credit of Mr. Irving and his friends the inspired and infallible messengers of the most High—would be much advanced, could it be shewn, that they were reality endowed with miraculous powers. And yet is it supposed that He who in every past age has, by means of the language and conduct of his true and only ambassadors, marked his disapprobation of priestcraft of every description, is now all at once altering his procedure, and lending to his deadliest foe of man the authority of his divine sanction? That He who caused Peter and John at the beautiful Temple, Acts iii., and Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, Acts xiv., to disclaim in language the most energetic, and at considerable risk to themselves, all personal merits and cures which they had performed—and to make use of their power not as so many claptraps, or means of attracting popular applause, but as the appropriate *media* of directing the minds of men to the doctrine of *Christ and him crucified*,—giving to uninspired man, an authority over the consciences of others, which, except in so far as they uttered the truth dictated by him to them, he withheld even from his immediate servants themselves? No, truly. None but *Christ* is *Priest of our Profession* is Lord of our consciences—none but he, therefore, shall by his word be permitted to speak there. All other authority in spiritual matters we disclaim. Being all of us as believers of the truth in opposition to the priestly character, Rom. xii. 1, Heb. xiii. 1, knowing that our priesthood has been conferred upon us by the Great Head of the Church himself, Rev. i. 6, we will not allow ourselves to be tricked out of this our invaluable inheritance by any individual or set of individuals possessing no authority, hood, emanating either directly or indirectly from Christ, but of Rome, and conferred by the hands of man.

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